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ABSTRACT

This profile, in outline form, of the English language situation in Italy discusses the role of English in society and in the educational system. The following topics are covered: a description of the role and status of English as the principal foreign language in the country; the place of English within the educational system at all levels from elementary school through university, including recognition of foreign qualifications, non-formal English instruction, school examinations, experimental schools, syllabuses, and textbooks; English teachers at all levels, their training, and their professional associations and conferences; instructional materials support; educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching; English instruction outside the educational system; British, American, and other agency support for English instruction; commercial opportunities; creative writing; current educational and linguistic research projects; and a list of additional information sources. A concluding statement suggests that the situation of English in Italy is changeable at present, with rising but different standards in the north and south. The British Council's efforts in teacher education is the biggest single contribution to instructional improvement within the state system. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Italy

Date: JULY 1985

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

English is the principal foreign language studied in Italy both at school and university level, although it is not a formal requirement for advancement in the educational system.

The public consciousness of the English language is witnessed by the wide use of English words and phrases in publicity and advertising materials and graffiti, and in the interest of young people in popular music and the pop culture of English-speaking countries. It is important in tourism and commerce and has been steadily gaining ground since the entry of Britain to the Common Market in 1973. It can, however, by no means be taken for granted that English will be spoken by government officials or others prominent in the hierarchy, especially those of the middle and older generations. Outside the English teaching world, academic, official or business visitors to Italy can expect to need to use Italian or the services of an interpreter for many of their contacts.

The reading public in Italy is small and books by British authors will therefore be read only by a small proportion of the total population.

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2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Italian Educational System

The educational system in Italy is centrally organized. All state primary, secondary and tertiary formal education is closely controlled by the Ministry of Education, both its budget and its content.

The School System

School curricula are laid down centrally by ministerial committees, although neither precise guidelines nor detailed syllabus blueprints are provided, nor is the use of any particular text book prescribed. Teachers use the published 'programmi ministeriali' to varying degrees as a reference when planning their courses.

All teachers in the state education system are public servants in the direct employ of the Ministry of Education. Most can be posted from school to school within their province and tenure in a job within a certain school is rare.

To achieve qualified teacher status, one should in theory do a short induction course (corso abilitante) although these have not been officially held since 1973, resulting in a severe backlog of practising but unrecognized teachers.

In 1982-1983, an examination was brought in to cope with this backlog and give successful candidates recognised status.

Achieving the various degrees of tenure, along with pension rights, is also done through success in competitive examinations. Italy does not have different salary scales for teachers on a career ladder, as in the UK. Salary depends on seniority and incremental points earned. Teachers are contracted to teach for sixteen to eighteen hours a week. Teachers covering the same subject within a school are not organized into departments and there are no department heads. Control and coordination comes mostly through the action of the head master or mistress or their deputy. The result of all this is that cohesion and planning within the school is not built into the administrative structure, but depends very much upon the quality and dedication of individuals.

Structure of the School System

The school system falls into three main sections (discounting nursery schools):

Scuola elementare	for children from 6-11
Scuola media inferiore	for children from 11-14
Scuola media superiore	for pupils from 14 upwards

The scuola elementare and the scuola media inferiore provide a basic general education, following uniform programmes nationwide, except in the case of the few experimental scuole medie inferiori (see below). Education is compulsory until the age of fourteen.

At scuola media superiore level the system diversifies, and pupils who have passed their scuola media leaving exams (licenza media) may choose from the types of school shown in the table opposite.

	Type of Programme	Number of years spent at school
Liceo Classico	Heavy emphasis on Latin, Greek (English studied in the first 2 years).	5 years
Liceo Scientifico	English studied for 5 years	5 years
Istituto Techico Commerciale	Preparation for accountancy etc (English studied for 5 years)	5 years
Istituto Tecnico Industriale	Various types, all vocational for eg electricians. (English studied for 2-5 years)	5 years
Istituto Magistrale	Preparation of future primary school teachers. (English studied for 2 years)	4 years
Istituto Professionale	Vocational training for eg tourist workers. (English studied for 2 years)	3 years
Liceo Artistico	Art and music. (English studied for 2 years)	5 years

The programmes of all these schools, except for the Istituti Professionali which lead to a Diploma, lead to the appropriate version of the matriculation examination (Maturità, see below) which provides the right of access to university and, within reasonable limits, to any faculty the candidate wishes.

The University System

Universities very rarely operate a system of selective entry. This is a result of changes in the system after the student protests of 1968.

Most university courses are four years in length, although full-time study is rare, and it is unusual for a student to complete his course within four years. Most universities are not residential. A degree is awarded after the successful completion of a number of separate examinations (thirty is the usual number for most courses) and writing a dissertation. Most of the examinations are conducted orally by an examining committee, and students enter for an examination when they feel ready.

It is only very recently (ministerial decree of 1982) that any provision has been made for formal postgraduate study. The Dottorato di Ricerca, instituted in 1983, is intended to be similar to a PhD degree. The scheme is only just getting under way amid bureaucractic and practical difficulties.

Teacher Training

There is no pre-service teacher training for graduates, and therefore no specialized teacher training institutes, nor a cadre of professional teacher trainers. Such teacher training as there is, is conducted in-service by university teachers or by specially-recruited school teachers who continue working in the school system, doing their training work in their free time after school.

Recognition of foreign qualifications

The regulations for recognition of degrees and other qualifications from abroad are complex, and recognition is not generally given to foreign qualifications obtained by Italian citizens. This means that Italians who have carried out postgraduate study abroad, or who have taken other qualifications such as the Royal Society of Arts Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English, do not, so far, benefit form this in career or salary terms.

An English first degree of three years duration is often not recognized by an institution employing a British graduate as the equivalent of an Italian four-year degree.

Non-formal teaching of English

There is a growing interest in the concept of continuing education (educazione permanente) and many English courses are run by local authorities as part of their Adult Education schemes, particularly the 150-hour courses intended for adults who wish to obtain qualifications (licenza media) that they were not able to reach during their school days.

School Examinations

Licenza Media

At the age of fourteen, the normal age at which scuola media studies end and the earliest legal age at which a child may leave school, a school leaving certificate, the Licenza Media, is taken.

The examination is internal to the school, but is monitored by outside assessors. The licenza is necessary for entry to the scuola media superiore.

The Maturità

At the age of eighteen or nineteen there are matriculation exams of various types, corresponding to the type of school attended. English forms an optional part of the Maturità in those schools where the language is studied for the full duration of the school programme.

The Maturità is an-across-the board examination in all the subjects taken. Most of the sub-tests are conducted orally, by committees drawn from the teaching profession.

Examinations and tests within the school

By law every student must be tested and marks allocated monthly, and internal end-of-year examinations are also given. A student who is not considered to have performed satisfactorily generally has to repeat the year, although there is a second chance to take exams at the beginning of the school year in September and thus avoid this.

The result is that classes often contain a wide range of ages.

English in the School System

Scuola Elementare

At the time of writing English is not an official subject in the elementary school in the state system. However a parliamentary committee reported at the end of 1983 in favour of introducing the teaching of foreign languages in all elementary schools. The Minister of Education announced in September 1984 that this project would go ahead in the academic year 1985/6

It is assumed in all discussion of the subject that English will be the normal choice for the foreign language to be taught, except where geographical or social conditions favour the teaching of French or German as in the Val d'Aosta or the Bolzano areas respectively.

At present the intention is to start teaching the foreign language in the third year of school (ie from the age of eight onwards). The problems posed by the need to train the teachers, in terms both of methodology and of language improvement, and also by the fact that most children entering school have in addition to cope with learning standard Italian alongside their normal dialect, make this project the source of some debate.

Outside the state system, in private schools and in English Clubs run after school, for which the parents pay, there is some teaching of English already, often using native-speaker teachers who may or may not have formal qualifications.

The ILSSE Project

In addition, since 1978 there has been an experimental project, run by the Ministry of Public Instruction, concerning the teaching of English to young children (from the age of eight) and the production of suitable teaching material. Pilot centres have been set up in Turin, Milan, Bologna, Rome and Naples under local coordinators, drawn mostly from amongst teachers in the scuole medie, inferiori and superiori, working with colleagues from the elementary schools.

The scheme has not been a great success from the organizational point of view, although individual coordinators have now gained valuable experience and expertise. There is no evidence that lessons learned from this pilot project will be applied to the nationwide introduction of modern language teaching in elementary schools. The British Council has not been professionally involved to any great degree in the ILSSE project (preferring to devote most of its resources to teacher training at the secondary level, see Section 3). However, many teacher-trainers who work with the British Council in other schemes are involved with ILSSE. Now that the introduction of English at this level is virtually certain, support will be offered where appropriate. (In September 1984, for example, Susan MacLennan of the University of East Anglia was invited to conduct a short course for teachers in the principles of teaching foreign languages to young children. This was held at the British Council in Milan. The British Council conference for Italian ELT teachers held in Bologna, 1985, had a section devoted to the subject.)

Scuola Media Inferiore

Every student is obliged to study a foreign language for at least three years from the age of eleven. About 90 per cent of students at this age opt to study English, but only about 60 per cent are allowed to do so, because of the need to keep teachers of other languages usefully employed. In the three years of scuola media inferiore, languages are studied for three hours a week.

Scuola Media Superiore

The curricula of the different types of scuola media superiore vary widely according to their particular academic or vocational bias, as do the status and emphasis of foreign language studies within each type of school. English again is one option, the most popular, with French and German as the next most frequent other choices.

The hours of English studied in each year of each type of school are given in the table below.

	YEAR ONE	YEAR TWO	YEAR THREE	YEAR FOUR	YEAR FIVE
Liceo Classico	4	4	0	0	0
Liceo Scientifico	3	4	3	4	4
Istituto Tecnico Commercial	3	3	3	3	3
Istituto Tecnico Industriale	3	3	3	3	3
Istituto Magistrale	4	4	0	0	0
Istituto Professionale	3	3	3	0	0
Liceo Artistico	3	3	3	3	3

Emphasis on English Studies in the various Scuole Medie Superiori

Paradoxically, it is only in the liceo scientifico that English literature is an obligatory subject of study for the Maturità examination (see above) Otherwise the emphasis is on the study of the language.

In schools where vocational or technical education takes place teachers are becoming more aware of the special language needs of their students, and interest is growing in materials and methodology that can help them meet these needs. However, it would not yet be true to say that English for Special Purposes is a widely understood field amongst secondary school teachers.

Experimental Schools

There is a number of experimental schools (scuole sperimentali) at both media inferiore and superiore level, in which the curricula are drawn up by the teaching staff subject to the approval of the Ministry of Public Instruction. In such schools it is possible for students to spend up to six hours a week studying a foreign language or languages.

Syllabuses

The responsibility for drawing up programmes lies centrally with ministerial committees. The Ministry revised the programmes for the scuola media inferiore in 1962 and the new programmes were implemented from 1970 onwards. The reform of the scuola media superiore is expected in the late 1980s. It will be the first revision of this programme since the 1920s. The scuola elementare reformed programme, including the project for the introduction of foreign language teaching, was authorized in Steptember 1984.

It is the teachers' responsibility to interpret the ministerial programmes into syllabuses and concrete course plans, and one basic teacher training need is to help them with this interpretation. Many teachers have not read the ministry programmes, and many others are doubtful what they mean in practical teaching terms.

Textbooks

The choice of text books is not laid down by the Ministry, and teachers are free to choose which books to use. A major constraint is, however, that after elemtnary school, where books are provided free, parents have to buy the school books used. This represents a major expenditure every school year. Teachers are under pressure from parents and administrators not to change textbooks too often.

There is a large number of locally written and published textbooks for the teaching of English, some of the recent ones very good, but British textbooks are also widely used, some being local adaptations of British textbooks (eg. Communicating Strategies, Longman/Zanichelli, 1st edition 1980, taken from Starting Strategies, Longman, 1977). Many British publishers have close working links with Italian publishers (eg Oxford University Press / La Nuova Italia).

English in the University System

There are fifty-nine universities in Italy - eighteen receiving only a partial grant from the State, forty-one wholly state-supported - ten of them having faculties in which English can be studied as a major degree subject.

English is also taught as a service or subsidiary subject in a wide variety of university faculties, such as Political Science, Economics, Psychology and Natural Sciences. For subjects such as Political Science a pass in one or more English examinations is frequently an obligatory part of the degree. It is estimated that there are approximately ten university faculties in which English has this service or subsidiary role.

English as a Degree Subject

There are two types of university faculty in which English can be studied as a main subject: Lettere and Magistero. (NB a Facoltà di Magistero is not to be confused with an Istituto Magistrale which is a type of scuola media superiore (see above).

A degree in Lettere is predominantly literary in character. More than one language can be studied, but it is also possible to specialize in one language. Language improvement classes, which aim to bring students to a level where they can cope with set texts, are usually provided in at least the first years of study.

A degree from the Facolta di Magistero is intended for those who wish to follow a teaching career, although it is in no sense a course of teacher preparation. The syllabus is often very similar to that of a Facoltà di Lettere, and few Magisteri offer courses in methodology or education. A degree from a Magistero tends to be held in lower esteem than one from a Facoltà di Lettere.

Many graduates of Lettere do, in fact, also become teachers, often in the scuole medie superiori.

Levels of English

Because obtaining the Maturita gives automatic right of entry to university, and because entry to specific faculties is not restricted to those who have studied the relevant subject matter previously, not all students start their courses with a high degree of proficiency in all the subjects they choose to study. There are, consequently, beginners and false beginners in English in many university courses of English.

The result of this and of the possibility of studying in a diluted or piecemeal fashion, with examinations mostly concerning literary criticism or the history of literature, is that many who obtain a degree in English may not necessarily have a high competence in the language itself.

The university teaching cadre, and teaching and learning conditions

Most language improvement work is done by native speaker lectors (lettori), working on contract to the unviersity (see section 3).

Courses in subject matter are usually given by Italian university staff. Very often, in spite of the fact that language work is seen as ancillary to the 'main' courses, there is little co-ordination between the professors and their lectors about courses, design and content.

Because of the principle of free access to university by any student possessing the Maturita, the first years of university English classes tend to be heavily overcrowded. It is not unusual for a university lector to have to conduct language improvement classes of 80-100 people, and lecture courses are often more crowded still.

The average amount of language tuition provided in Lettere and Magistero courses, as well as on 'service English' courses, is three hours a week.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

In the School System

The approximate number is 30.000 teachers in the state secondary system (20.000 in the scuola media inferiore and 10.000 in the scuola media superiore).

At the time of writing it is not known how the necessary teachers for the proposed introduction of English into the elementary schools will be recruited or trained in-service or what sort of numbers will be involved.

Recruitment of teachers to the secondary system is from graduates of the university Faculties of Magistero or Lettere. The profession is greatly overcrowded; any young would-be teachers may have to wait years before being allowed to compete for tenure. Low salaries also mean that many teachers have second jobs.

Teachers of English are unestablished (precari) on entry into the profession. Subsequently they sit a competitive examination and if successful they become established (di ruolo). The last examinations for scuola media inferiore and scuola media superiore teachers were held in 1983 and 1984 after a break of seven years.

Only Italian citizens can hold permananet posts in secondary schools. A restricted number of native-speaker teaching assistants (assistenti) are appointed every year to work in scuole sperimentali, with specific responsibility for oral/conversation work. These are normally drawn from British university students of Italian doing their year's residence abroad as part of their degree courses.

In the University System

The grades in the Italian university system are (from the top):

Professore Ordinario
Professore Associato
Ricercatore

These posts are normally held by Italian nationals, although there are a few cases of British or American citizens at the level of Professore Associato and Ricercatore. At these levels most teaching of English concerns literature or linguistic theory. The language work is handled by lectors. The lector (lettore) posts are held on yearly contract, with a theoretical time-limit of five years on the occupancy of a post by a particular person. Most lettori are British Commonwealth or American citizens and native speakers of English. There are no accurate official figures available for the number of lettori working in Italian universities at any one time, but the estimate for 1984/85 is one thousand.

In theory a university can employ one lettore for every 150 students in a faculty, but universities have not been granted the extra funds to pay for this.

Every academic year starts with great uncertainty about the number of posts available for lettori. Since contracts are not normally signed until well after the term has started, unrest and industrial action are fairly normal occurrences.

Teacher Training

There is no history of pre-service teaching training in the Italian system. A 'corso abilitante' (induction course), replaced in 1983 by a competitive examination, used to be provided for graduates wishing to enter the teachng profession, but was more of a rite of passage than a real course of teacher preparation.

Every teacher has the right to five days a year release from school for purposes of professional updating (attendance at conferences, short courses, etc). However, since most teachers work only in the mornings there is the possibility of using their own time for attendance at seminars and meetings. Until recently most teacher training has been through the activity of voluntary groups and teachers' associations, and through attendance at the seminar programmes offered by the British Coucil, and to a more limited extent by the United States Information Service (USIS).

<u>The Progetto Speciale per le Lingue Straniere (PSLS)</u>

In 1977, however, the Ministry of Public Instruction set up, in collaboration with USIS, a project aimed at the in-service training of all Italian

teachers of English in the scuola media inferiore system. This was subsequently extended to the French and German languages, with involvement by the Centre Culturel Français and the Goethe Institute. From 1982 the scheme was extended to teachers in the scuola media superiore. The British Coucnil was involved in the project from an early stage, but was not given official recognition as a partner in it until 1981.

The PSLS scheme is operated through local co-ordinators recruited from the teaching body. They are given a short training course abroad (in the USA, in France, or in Germany) and on their return set up training groups of colleagues (twenty five is the average number) in their own areas. The Ministry of Public Instruction oversees the project and authorizes its finances. The British Council has a place on the professional steering committee, along with colleagues from the other cultural bodies, but has not yet reached an agreement about providing an officially recognized training course for co-ordinators.

The course runs for 100 hours, and consists of weekly meetings of three hours each plus a few intensive periods of one or two days, on which teachers should obtain release from school in order to attend the course for a full day.

The Americans support the scheme on the spot by providing ten Junior Fulbright scholars who are normally resident in Italy for one year, and who help up to about five groups in their area on a regular basis, often with language improvement work. The other foreign agencies, including the British Council, support the scheme both by providing professional advice to co-ordinators and by visiting groups to give lectures and work-shops.

In this way the Ministry has reached over 4.000 teachers of English although, since the scheme is not compulsory and the teachers who attend the course receive no benefit in career terms or in terms of 'time off in lieu', it seems that the limit of teachers who are willing to take part will soon be reached.

Regional Development of Teacher Training

Teachers Centres

The Italian government has plans to set up teachers' centres in every province. When this comes about, there will be a call for additional British Council support.

IRRSAE

In 1974 IRRSAE (Istituti Regionali di Ricerca, Sperimentazione ed Aggiornamento Educativi) were to be set up in each of the eighteen regions of Italy. In fact they started to come into existence in 1980. Their function is to provide for the in-service training of teachers in all subjects in their region. An IRRSAE consists of a committee composed of some members appointed by the regional administration and some professional members appointed on secondment from school or university teaching. IRRSAEs are granted an annual budget by the Ministry of Public Instruction with which to carry out educational training and research projects, subject to Ministry approval.

As from 1984 IRRSAEs should be collaborating fully with the Ministry of Public Instruction in the running of the PSLS scheme, with a view to taking over the running of the project in future. IRRSAEs are also engaged in running courses of their own for English teachers, and the British Council is co-operating with them both in the provision of speakers and in the overall planning of courses. Examples include the DTFM (Distance Training Foundation Module - see Section 8) and courses on literature run for IRRSAE Liguria in October/December 1984.

Teachers' Associations

There are five main teacher's associations:

Lingua e Nuova Didattica (LEND)

This was founded in 1971. The British Council was instrumental in its foundation and has co-operated with the association since its initiation. It is concerned with all foreign languages taught in Italian schools. It has a headquarters in Rome and a national committee, but works mostly on the basis of locally-organized groups which hold regular meetings. It has political overtones in that it sees the problems of teaching standards and conditions as inseparable from the wider social framework. The LEND journal was started in 1972. The British Council's English Language Teaching Officer (ELO) is a member of the editorial board. National seminars on specific topics are organised roughly every two years.

Associazione Nazionale Insegnanti Lingue Straniere (ANILS)

The foundation of LEND impelled ANILS in 1972 to re-enter the field of teacher-training, which it had allowed to lapse. It publishes a monthly journal. ANILS is more conservative than LEND and tends to attract the older members of the profession. Unlike LEND, it has a good proportion of men as members. The British Council continues to support its activities when invited.

Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Italian (ATESI)

This is the only association exclusively concerned with English. It is centred in Rome, is the inspiration of Mary Finocchiaro and is internationally well known. It functions as the Italian outlet of Internatioanl TESOL, Washington. It publishes an occasional Newsletter. The British Council's ELO Italy is a member of the committee.

Association Europeenne des Enseignants (AEDE)

This is related to the European Movement, with a secretariat in Switzerland. The Italian section has an office in Rome which organizes educational activities, including language teacher-training. There is also an active group in Macerata (Marche) which organizes summer schools for teachers of English (including language improvement) in the Alps as well as in Britain. The Rome office publishes a monthly, Scuola d'Europa.

Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (AIA)

This is the professional Association of Teachers of English at university level. The Association publishes a Newsletter which receives financial assistance from the British Council, and there is an annual conference to which the British Council usually seeks to bring speakers. A professional journal Analysis was started in autumn 1983 and is published twice a year.

Journals

The following journals on language teaching and applied linguistics are published in Italy. Many of them are published by the teachers' associations mentioned above.

Scuola e Lingue Moderne - published for ANILS - monthly.

Perspectives - published by USIS January, May, November.

Papers on Work in Progress - published by OILTA (University of Bologna) - occasional.

Le Lingue del Mondo - published by Valmartina Editore - bimonthly.

Lingue e Civiltà - published by Centro di Linguistica Applicata e Didattica delle Lingue - quarterly.

Lingua e Nuova Didattica - published by LEND - quarterly.

Problems and Experiences in the Teaching of English - published by La Nuova Italia/Oxford Univerity Press - quarterly.
This is a new journal, started in 1983. The articles are in English; the British Council's ELO Italy is on the Editorial Board.

TELL (Teaching English Language and Literature)
From 1979 to 1984 issued twice yearly from the Naples British Council Teachers' Centre, now a twice-yearly supplent to Problems and Experiences. TELL acts as a link between the British Council Teachers Centres and groups of teachers throughout Italy. It tries to increase awareness of the work done by these groups and to encourage collaboration between the teachers in different categories: secondary teachers, university teachers and those in the private schools.

Analysis - published by AIA, started in Autumn 1983 and intended to appear twice-yearly.

Conferences

A number of conferences are held in Italy at regular intervals by the institutions and associations concerned with the teaching of English.

British Council Conferences:

Bologna ELT Conference

The British Council has run three conferences in Bologna since 1982, with the themes:

ELT New Ideas from Britain (1982)
ELT Focus on the Learner (1983)
ELT Teaching and the Teacher (1984)

It is intended to hold a similar conference annually for at least the next few years. These conferences have been attended by an average of 2,200 teachers a year. Each one involved the participation of fifty or so speakers, and about thirty British, American and Italian publishing houses provided a book exhibition and sponsored speakers. Reports of the first three conferences are published by Modern English Publications, (ed. Susan Holden).

Naples Literature Conference

Two conferences on the Teaching of English Literature in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context have been organized by the Naples British Council in collaboration with the University of Naples, one in November 1981 and another in December 1983. All the participants worked in Italian universities. The British specialists invited were Henry Widdowson (1981) and Ronald Carter and Christopher Brumfit (1983). This activity is a link between the British Council English Language Teaching (ELT) programme, mainly concerned with secondary school teaching, and its English Studies programme concerned with

universities. Ideas from the conferences are being fed into a literature/ teaching project in Southern Italian secondary schools, and it is hoped in future to hold a conference specifically for secondary school teachers of literature.

ATESI

This is the Italian TESOL conference run by Mary Finocchiaro. It takes place in Rome in the autumn of each year. British Council staff contribute to the conference by helping with its preparation and giving talks.

About a thousand teachers attend each year. Reports of the conference are disseminated in a local journal published through the United States Information Service office in Rome and called Perspectives.

LEND

LEND runs a conference every two years. In 1985 the conference will be in Rimini, having been in Venice in 1978, Martina Franca in 1980 and Viareggio in 1983. These conferences attract an audience of 1,500 or so and are the main Italian-organized event.

ANILS

ANILS also runs conferences but on a smaller scale and at irregular intervals. The average participation is about 300.

The Ministry of Public Instruction has in the past been generous in authorizing release from school for teachers wishing to attend conferences, but since 1983 there has been a more stringent approach to the granting of release because of the financial implications. (If teachers take more than their entitlement of five days for professional updating, this means that supply teachers have to be paid to cover their absences).

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

A mixture of locally-published and UK-published English teaching textbooks is used. Many of the older Italian-produced courses are of poor quality but some recent publications, eg. Got the Message? are well thought out and lively. Among the UK-published books, the Strategies series (Longman) is particularly widely used.

Most teachers have, in theory, access to a classroom cassette recorder, but often course books are used without the accompanying tapes. The high cost of tapes dissuades many teachers from using them. Operating language laboratories are a rarity.

A number of schools are acquiring video equipment and computers, but their principle use in language teaching lies in the future. (See also Section 9).

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

The Ministry of Education is divided into departments which cover different types of school, and also some general functions such as cultural exchanges (scambi culturali) and teacher development and training (Dipartimento Studi e Programmazione). Many of the senior posts are given on political grounds, and this can exacerbate inter-departmental friction. Decisions about apparently routine matters must be ratified at the highest levels. A decree must be

signed by the Minister, for example, in order for a particular group of teachers to be allowed leave from school to follow an official training course; or so that a conference such as the British Council ELT Congress or TESOL may qualify for teachers to be given time off to attend.

The Role of the Inspectorate

School inspectors are of two categories:

National Inspectors - working directly from the Ministry of Public Instruction.

Regional Inspectors - a new category set up in 1982 with responsibility for particular categories of school in each region.

The relationship between the two categories of inspector has not yet been clearly established.

The role of the inspector is not clearly defined as far as teacher development is concerned. Inspectors are often more involved with settling disputes and handling complaints within a school than with administrative tasks. However, many of the new intake of regional inspectors are professionally aware and have taken the initiative in setting up teachers' groups and seminars in their areas.

The Role of the Provveditorato

The Provveditorato is the representative office of the Ministry in each Provincia.

It is through the Provveditorato that money for projects such as the PSLS (see Section 3) is channelled, and by which requests for teacher transfers are handled. It is responsible locally for the administration of national exams such as the 'concorsi' for teachers (see Section 2). Inspectors often work from the Provveditorato offices.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

School programmes, although brief, are produced centrally by the Ministry of Public Instruction, advised by specially appointed committees; a ministerial law is then passed. The scuola elementare programme is undergoing a reform to introduce foreign languages from the age of eight within the next few years.

The scuola media inferiore programme was rewritten in 1970 to take account of a more communicative approach to language teaching. The scuola media superiore pogramme has remained the same since the 1920s, although a reform has been imminent for some years.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE STATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

There is a large private sector within the educational system, run by religious orders and heavily subsidized by the Ministry of Public Instruction in the public interest. Ten per cent of primary schools and 25 per cent of secondary schools are in this category. The status of these schools is now in question, following the concordat of 1929 between the Italian state and the Vatican. There is an extensive network of private schools of English.

Private Schools of English

There are over 750 privately run language schools. Many of these belong to chains such as British Schools, Oxford Schools, Oxford Institutes, Wall Street Institutes, etc. In addition, some schools work on a franchise basis, such as International House and Berlitz. The British Council runs schools in Naples and Milan with a total student population of approximately 4,200 (1,700 in Milan, 2,500 in Naples).

Teaching Cadre

Many of these private language schools employ young, unqualified native speakers of English, and their practice of employing them according to the strict letter of Italian labour law could in many cases be improved. A very few private schools provide opportunities for these employees to follow a Royal Society of Arts course leading to their Preparatory Certificate or Diploma in the Teaching of English Further Education scheme.

AISLI (Associazione Italiana delle Scuole per la Lingua Inglese)

This is a professional association of private language schools, which was started in 1980 with the British Council DTEOs in Naples and Milan as founder members. It aims to improve the professional standards of its member schools and to lay down a code of conduct regarding the employment of teachers, advertising practice and service to clients. It is a voluntary self-regulating organization with no official standing in Italy, but it is hoped that over the coming year member schools will win a good enough reputation with the public for membership of AISLI to be in itself a recommendation, and that schools at present outside the association will be encouraged to seek membership.

English by Radio and Television

Follow me (BBC) was shown on national television channels from 1982 to 1983, and started transmission on RAI 2 again in January 1985.

Non-Italian examinations and tests

University of Cambridge Examinations in English

There are twenty-one Cambridge examination centres in Italy. The British Council acts as overseas agent, making regular inspection visits and holding yearly meetings of Cambridge local secretaries and yearly oral examiners' meetings. The British Council Direct Teaching of English Operations (DTEOs) in Milan and Naples are Cambridge examination centres. Italy is usually fourth or fifth in the world in terms of the number of centres for Cambridge examinations.

Other Examinations

The ARELS oral and Oxford Delegacy examinations have started to gain some ground in Italy, with centres in individual language schools. ARELS oral examinations are taken in the DTEOs in Milan and Naples. The Royal Society of Arts examinations in the Communicative Use of English have so far been adopted only in one or two centres but are under consideration for use in the DTEOs in Italy.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

British Council Examinations and Tests

The Foundation Certificate in English

From 1980 to 1984 the DTEOs in Italy piloted a test of English intended for students who have followed approximately 200 hours of instruction (or two academic years of ninety hours a year as provided by the British Counil courses). The test was developed by Council staff in Italy with moderation by its English Language Services Department. This activity has now ceased, the last test being in summer 1984.

English Language Testing Service (ELTS)

The ELTS is now fully implemented in Italy. The tests are carried out twice a year in Milan and in Rome, and at other times in special cases.

Direct Teaching of English Operations

The British Council manages two DTEOs in Italy, in Milan and Naples. A third pilot centre operated in Rome for four years (1980-1984) with some 250 students. Both the existing centres operate at capacity in a highly competitive environment. In-house General English is the core of a teaching programme under continuous development, enhanced by courses in literature, translation, and language improvement for Italian teachers of English. The development of 'Flexicourses' in Naples offers considerable potential for extension to Milan where Computer Assisted Language Learning, Community Language Learning and Self Access study are being progressively integrated into mainstream courses.

The Milan centre has operated since 1946. Milan currently has 1700 students and seventeen members of staff (fifteen London contract, two locally engaged) in addition to a DTEO manager.

The Naples centre started in 1957. It has 2500 students and thirty members of staff (twenty-four London contract, six locally engaged). Both centres are founder members of AISLI (see Section 7).

British Council Participation

British Council staff co-operate with official schemes and voluntary groups as outlined above. At the time of writing staff were employed partly or wholly on teacher training in Rome, Milan and Naples.

Teachers' Centres (TC)

Each British Council office has a Teachers' Centre which serves as the focal point for teachers in the area. Each TC has a well-stocked library of ELT books and material available for consultation. In addition there is a programme of free weekly seminars on ELT and applied linguistics subjects, and of short courses for teachers for which fees are charged.

Distance Training Foundation Modules (DTFM)

A very important British Council initiative, started in 1979, was a course for training teachers at a distance. The course consisted of ten units of material on topics in the teaching of English, designed to be implemented by Italian co-ordinators after a course of training in their use. They involve

private reading by participants, leading to group discussion work on the use and evaluation of teaching ideas by the participants of their own classes. This course has to date been used mostly under the auspices of the IRRSAEs, although it is hoped to be able to integrate it into the work done by British Council teacher trainers for the PSLS project (see Section 3).

TELL (Teaching English language and Literature)

See Section 3 on journals. This journal was started in 1974, edited by staff from the British Council, Naples. Since 1983 it has been issued twice a year as a supplement to La Nuova Italia/Oxford University Press journal Problems and Experiences (qv).

Conferences

See Section 3 concerning the British Council ELT conferences in Bologna, and the Naples Literature Conferences.

Other British Activity in Teacher Training

Several British-run or owned private language schools, such as International House, Turin, British Schools in Trieste and Florence and Centro di Lingue Moderne, Trento have set up teachers' centres for Italian teachers and run courses and seminars for them, as well as providing materials and professional support.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The focus of USA support for English teaching and teacher training in Italy is in the USIS office in Rome. Their English Teaching Officer, Italy, is based there, and the USIS Library has a selection of journals on language and linguistics as well as a small section of books and materials of interest to teachers of English.

The USIS office in Milan has a library but no section specifically devoted to books for English teaching.

In Naples, the American Consulate acts as host for USIS projects such as occasional seminars on English teaching, and there is a library, although without a specialized ELT training section. The American Studies Centre, on whose board the American Consul sits, receives some subsidy from the United States Government. It offers courses in English Language and American Culture to approximately 600 students.

There are also USIS offices within the American consulates of Florence, Genoa, Palermo and Trieste.

Scholarships and bursaries for study or personal research in the United States are offered annually.

The major American programme for teacher training in Italy concerns the Progetto Speciale per le Lingue Straniere (see Section 3) which involves the English Teaching Officer and ten Junior Fulbright Scholars resident in Italy.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

None of the other English-speaking countries has any official involvement with English teaching and training in Italy.

The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) of the United Nations in Rome has a large language training section in which the employees of FAO, many of whom are Italian as well as from all other member countries, receive training in the language which is specific to their job needs. English is taught alongside Spanish and French.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Italian students, often schoolchildren on package tours organized by specialized agencies, form the bulk of the summer business of many UK language schools. No exact numbers are available but they must run into many thousands.

There is increasing interest by UK langauge schools and private individuals in the possibilities of setting up branches in Italy. The regulations that govern this are complicated in the extreme, and it would require the services of a professional consultant to guarantee a safe path through them all. Restrictions on exporting currency make setting up an Italian branch of a British organization less attractive. Many private language schools are owned by British nationals but are registered as Italian firms.

The ELT publishing industry pays great attention to Italian markets, as is shown by the willingness of many publishers to sponsor speakers and pay for exhibition space at the various ELT conventions. There is an estimated turnover of £5 million a year from ELT books. However, the distribution of books through booksellers and agents is not uniformly efficient, and some quite important publishers fail to make good sales largely due to the distribution problem. Although the Ministry of Public Instruction is a centralizing influence in most respects, there is no Ministry-approved list of books. The choice of textbooks is the responsibility of individual teachers and schools, and sales therefore tend to be in piecemeal batches.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

There are no known Italian authors currently producing work in English.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

The CEDE (Centro Europeo di Educazione), Villa Falconieri, Frascati, is the rough equivalent of the National Foundation for Educational Research in the UK. A group of researchers was taken on in 1982, mostly on secondment from schools and universities, to conduct studies into different topics relevant to the school system. One project concerns the characteristics of students' written English in scuole medie superiori.

A group from a number of different universities is working on a research project in comparative pragmatics between English and Italian.

Normally one British Council one-year scholarship and two or three bursaries for shorter periods of study are allocated each year for Italian candidates working in the field of applied linguistics, pedagogy or literature. More information was given in Section 2.

14. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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Most information comes directly from interviews with the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction.

15. GENERAL STATEMENT

The only conclusion that we came to in preparing the ELT Profile for Italy was that it would be extremely unwise to draw any long-term conclusion from the present survey. We have been obliged to present a frozen picture of a very fluid situation.

Throughout the school system changes in curriculum and examinations are under way, including a major reform of the teaching of languages in the elementary schools, but we cannot predict how any of this will turn out. In secondary schools English continues to be by far the most popular foreign language, with parents at least. The private sector language schools seem to be maintaining but not increasingenrolments. Very few language schools provide anything other than the few-hours-a-week approach and many seem to have reached the maximum acceptable fee levels.

The standard of English taught in the secondary school system has improved although standards still vary between north and south. Although our Direct Teaching operations are much more visible, the work of the Coucnil in teacher training has probably made the biggest single contribution to the improvement within the state system.